



07/ **WABI SABI: OF ESSENCE AND POETRY**

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EN_FOR many landscape architects – or at least those like me – there is real joy in capturing the essence of a landscape, in seeing the idea of the place made manifest. After travelling in Japan last summer, I began to feel a particular joy in *wabi-sabi*, the Japanese name for a beauty that is elusive and impermanent. *Wabi-sabi* is about incompleteness: it is earthy and imperfect, even messy, and its tactile quality is integral to the adventure of design.

Too often process and purchasing protocols sterilize design. To us lies the challenge of allowing contingencies to exist; of engaging our clients as champions of the project; of applying our creativity to excavate for solutions; of thinking from the end point to the beginning. Transformation is a messy business; new territory is being forged out of the old. Yet inspiration has rarely been found in order; chaos is to be embraced. The Chebucto Gun Emplacement conveys that message.

I recommend a book printed, fittingly, by Imperfect Publishing: Leonard Koren's *Wabi Sabi: For Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers*, (1994). His advice has become my mantra: "Pare down to the essence, but don't remove the poetry." Amen.

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BRAVO to VIRGINIA BURT DESIGNS, who made the ASLA's list of Landscape Architect's Best Unknown Firms: the unsung heroes/heroines in the biz.
bit.ly/BestUnknown

SLOT VIEW, CHEBUCTO GUN EMPLACEMENT NO. 1, NOVA SCOTIA.
PHOTO STEPHEN PATTERSON



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